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2/24/77

ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: Acting Administrator

FROM: James L. Liverman, Assistant Administrator
for Environment and Safety

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR FIELD COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT POSITION
OF AES ACTIVITIES IN THE PACIFIC AREA

Issue

Should ERDA/AES designate a headquarters' staff person to coordinate and manage research, health, and safety activities in the Pacific area?

Background

During the nuclear testing period in the Pacific, the inhabitants of Bikini and Enewetak were temporarily displaced from these atolls to ensure that they would be safe. In order to make these islands habitable again after three decades, the Federal government has undertaken a long cleanup and rehabilitation process at both atolls. The Department of Defense is responsible for the clean-up activities while the Department of Interior is responsible for rehabilitation of the returning Marshallese. ERDA is responsible for advising both agencies on matters concerning short and long term radiation safety aspects of rehabilitation and cleanup. Rehabilitation is underway at Bikini atoll. As outlined below, it is not proceeding without continuing attention by ERDA staff even though this atoll had less testing than Enewetak. Planning and mobilization for the cleanup of Enewetak atoll is underway. Nuclear tests left two islands, Runit and Engebi, contaminated, a source of continuing radiation concern. Our experience from the Bikini rehabilitation indicates that many of the radiation problems could have been mitigated if scientific and surveillance personnel were present to address these problems during the cleanup phase. ERDA presently has a \$3m research/surveillance program in the Marshall Islands that is already complex and multifaceted. This program focuses on six aspects:

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- o **Environmental Surveillance** - In order to assess the potential hazards to the health and safety of the people of the Marshalls, ERDA conducts long term monitoring of radioactivity in soils, waters, and biota that were exposed during nuclear testing.
- o **Medical Surveillance** - For 20 years ERL personnel have been concerned with Marshallese who as a result of nuclear testing were exposed to fallout.
- o **Resettlement Research** - This is a recent addition to the ERDA program. It is intended to provide ERDA and others with important information on how the returning Marshallese, both at Bikini and Eniwetok, can live safely and in harmony with a contaminated environment.
- o **ERDA Research Interests** - The nuclear testing programs provided an opportunity to scientifically study the mechanisms of migration, transfer uptake, and removal of long-lived radio-nuclides within these ecosystems. Information from such research is transferrable to considerations of nuclear facilities in similar environments.
- o **Non-Nuclear Research** - For 22 years ERDA and AEC have operated the Laboratory at Eniwetok. The recent three volume publication (NVO 628-1, 1976) shows that much good sciences was accomplished at nominal cost. Approximately a thousand investigators with other support performed studies of this atoll.
- o **Research Vessel** - An Army Landing Craft-Utility vessel in support of ERDA's research programs in the Marshalls is based at Kwajalein is funded by RER.

In the Spring of 1975 I assigned NVO the task of coordinating our activities in the Marshalls. Assigned functions include a liaison with other scientists and agencies having responsibilities in this area, to review and comment on new research proposals and publications and to recommend changes in direction and levels of research efforts. However, these functions did not include either policy or program decisions which are a Headquarters' responsibility. This action plans to combine these functions for more efficient operation.

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The above six activities receive direction from at least three Headquarters' Divisions. Some of the activities include projects that have been ad hoc, short-range efforts while others include long-term commitments. It is clear to me at this time that ERDA has a long term, broad commitment, which will impact on many facets of the lives of the inhabitants of Bikini and Eniwetok, and to a lesser extent of other Pacific atolls as well. Some specific and long term concerns are:

- Biological availability of radionuclides through complex and interrelated marine, terrestrial and atmospheric pathways by which atoll radioactivity is transferred to man.
- Long-term surveillance of radioactive wastes which resulted from nuclear testing activities and now are to be entombed in the atoll craters of Runit.
- Medical surveillance of the people of Rongelap and Utirik exposed to radiation from the Bravo atmospheric test of 1954.

These concerns clearly require a stronger coupling between my office and the field research and surveillance activities in order that the many and diverse activities may be welded into a coherent, relevant and more responsive overall program that will enable ERDA to provide timely guidance to both DOD and DOI during the clean up and rehabilitation activities.

Alternatives

Option A: Determine that it is in the best interest of ERDA's program in the Pacific to provide a scientific manager for all AES activities in the Pacific. The scientific manager would serve as Director of the Mid-Pacific Marine Laboratory. He would serve under direct supervision of the AES but would be administratively attached to the Nevada Operations Office extension on the Pacific area (NVO-PASO). The present coordinator serves under the supervision of NVO.

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pro: This option is compatible with the recent ERDA philosophy outlined in the lab and field report which emphasizes the importance of regional management. Under this concept an authoritative, responsible full time official would be colocated with our Pacific Support Base which is close to the scene of many complex Pacific activities. Headquarters direction would be addressed to a single manager who would be responsible for attending to conflicts and ambiguities rather than having them (as now) go unresolved [or having resolution attempted at the field project level].

con: This option would require one additional Federal position at the GS 15 or 16 level.

Option B: Determine that it is not in the interest of ERDA's programs in the Pacific to assign one Headquarters' personnel as field coordinator and manager of the AES activities.

pro: No action is required to implement this option. No Federal position is required.

con: A continuation of an uncoordinated program would not gain the maximum efficiency of the funding.

Discussion

This requested action is not a recent development as the enclosed letter of 2/74 shows there have been three years of staff considerations of these aspects by AES. As the position of Director of MPML is vacant now, and the clean-up activities of DOD are being formulated, it is requested that this action be expedited as soon as possible.

In addition, there are some administrative advantages of a focused ERDA program in this area as illustrated by two lawsuits. In October, 1975, a law suit was filed on behalf of the people of Bikini in the Federal District Court in Hawaii against the Administrator of ERDA and other U.S.A. officials as defendants.

It was alleged that the Federal government was responsible for numerous failures and deficiencies in dealing with the people of Bikini. In November, 1976, an attorney for the people of Utirik filed an administrative claim with the Administrator (and also the Secretary of Interior) for \$100,000,000. This was allegedly due to individual and community damages resulting from nuclear atmospheric tests.

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Thus, these and other matters concerning our relationship with the people of the Marshall Islands are well known and are frequently reviewed by the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations. Thus, there is the substantial legal and political significance to our programs and actions and strong justification for coordinating them at the national policy level.

Recommendation

That you approve Option A for the establishment of one Headquarters' position to coordinate and manage health and safety research and surveillance activities in the Pacific.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

Date _____

Next Steps

Have AES carry out this assignment by setting up a desk with either the NVO-PASO office or with the University of Hawaii.

Concurrences

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| ANS, Starbird | Date _____ | Concur _____ Nonconcur _____ |
| APD, Yarymovych | Date _____ | Concur _____ Nonconcur _____ |
| GC, Wilderotter | Date _____ | Concur _____ Nonconcur _____ |
| PER, Grable | Date _____ | Concur _____ Nonconcur _____ |

Enclosures:

1. Authority for FEMA responsibility--memo 10/75
2. Xerox cover of three volumes of M.I. Research activities
3. Letter 2/74 - E. Gates (NVO) to James L. Liverman

Prepared by: WOFforster/BER:EP/mab: 353-5323: 2/24/77

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